

REMARKS / DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

Claims 1-12 are pending in the application; claims 6-12 are newly added.

The applicants thank the Examiner for acknowledging the claim for priority and receipt of certified copies of all the priority document(s).

The Examiner is respectfully requested to state whether the drawings are acceptable.

Claims are amended for non-statutory reasons: to correct one or more informalities, remove figure label number(s), and/or to replace European-style claim phraseology with American-style claim language. The claims are not narrowed in scope and no new matter is added.

The Office action rejects claims 4 and 5 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph; claims 4 and 5 are correspondingly amended herein.

The Office action rejects claim 1-3 and 5 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b), and claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Evans (USP 3,602,759). The applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Evans fails to teach an end cap with plug pins connected to electrodes, wherein the end cap is substantially made of a shrink material, as claimed in each of the independent claims 1 and 5, and fails to teach fixing the end cap to the end portion of a glass discharge vessel by shrinking the end cap, as claimed in independent claim 5.

Evans teaches placing a sleeve of shrinkable plastic over a fully formed fluorescent lamp that includes one or more end caps. Evans does not teach that the end cap of the fluorescent lamp is made of a shrinkable material, and Evans does not teach that the end cap is fixed to the glass vessel by shrinking the end cap.

The Office action asserts that Evans' shrinkable sleeves 32 correspond to the applicants' claimed end caps. The applicants respectfully disagree with this assertion. The applicants' claimed end cap is the element in which the plug pins are held. In each of Evans' figures, Evans' base member 18 (18a-18d) is the element of the fluorescent lamp in which the plug pins are held:

"Suitable base members 18 are secured to the sealed ends of the envelope and carry terminals 20 that are connected to the respective lead wires."
(Evans, column 2, lines 47-50.)

Evans does not teach that this end element 18 that holds the plug terminals is made of a heat shrink material, and Evans does not teach that the heat shrink sleeves 32 are used to hold the plug terminals. Accordingly, Evans cannot be said to teach a shrinkable end cap in which the plug pins are held, as claimed in each of the applicants' independent claims.

Also, with respect to claim 5, Evans specifically teaches that the base members 18 are secured to the sealed ends of the envelope, and does not teach that this securing of the base member 18 to the ends of the glass envelop is accomplished by shrinking the base member 18.

Because Evans fails to teach an end cap with plug pins connected to electrodes, wherein the end cap is substantially made of a shrink material, the applicants respectfully maintain that the rejection of claims 1-3 and 5 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b), and claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Evans is unfounded, and should be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, the applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the objection(s) and/or rejection(s) of record, allow all the pending claims, and find the application in condition for allowance. If any points remain in issue that may best be resolved through a personal or telephonic interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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